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In the Spy World, One for the Right

When I read that John Walker, the alleged Soviet spy, was a flaming conservative, I immediately called up Bubba Peterson, who speaks for the right when Pat Buchanan is sleeping.

"How come Walker turned out to be one of your guys and not one of ours?" I asked him.

"Where do you get that stuff?" Peterson retorted. "We can't take responsibility for every right-wing nut in the country."

"Well, he's definitely one of yours, and we don't like it when someone allegedly sells this country's most vital secrets. How could you have let it happen?"

"Why should we take the blame for what Walker supposedly did?"

"Because you laid it on all the liberals when the Rosenbergs and Alger Hiss were caught. We still get blamed for what they did."

"I don't blame you."

"Nixon does. The right has been painting us red for years. It's about time they got splattered with a brush of their own."

"The Walker family has no connection with the right-wing movement," Peterson protested.

"You can tell that to Robert Novak, but we neosocialists aren't buying it. How many more spies do the right-wingers have

hiding in safe houses around the country?"

I could tell I was getting to Peterson. "I ought to come over there and punch you in the nose."

"Sure, that's the way all you people behave when faced with treachery in the ranks. Why don't you admit you made a mistake by letting Walker into your club?"

"I never heard of John Walker or his family until the spy story broke."

"Then you're twice as guilty. Don't tell me the conservatives don't check the backgrounds of their members."

"We're a political faction. Why should we give anyone a security check?"

"Because they could turn out to be spies. Do you think we limousine liberals would have let Walker sign up without making sure he wasn't working for the Kremlin? Why don't you just come out and admit your people were duped? Your mistake is that you think because a guy denounces abortion and the Equal Rights Amendment that he's a 100 percent loyal American. I hope the Walker case teaches you a lesson."

"What lesson?" Peterson wanted to know.

"That the guy who screams the loudest against gun control could be the one closest to Gorbachev."

"Why are you doing this to me?"

"Because, Peterson, every time we came out against the B1 bomber, you said we were on the KGB payroll. You claimed anyone who was for the arms talks was a victim of Soviet disinformation. You have coupled people who don't want to go to war over Nicaragua with the Politburo. Why shouldn't we make you feel bad about John Walker?"

"How do we know Walker wasn't one of yours, pretending to be one of ours?"

"Because he allegedly did it for *money* instead of for Mother Russia. Don't you understand, Peterson, we can no longer depend on your people to keep us safe from communism. You've been infiltrated by the Russkies and until you clean house we can't let you have a monopoly on waving the American flag. How many more Walkers do you have on your rolls?"

There was a lot of sputtering on the other end of the line. "I never believed you'd stoop this low. Don't you have any shame?"

"I'm not questioning *your* loyalty," I said. "And I certainly don't blame you for what the Walker family is alleged to have done. But I do have something further to say to you."

"What's that?"

"Don't let it happen again."

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